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## **A Theoretical Perspective on Women and Poverty in Botswana**

By Gwen N. Lesetedi<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Botswana has made remarkable progress in terms of economic and social development. The position of the government is that policies and programmes should benefit all citizens equally. More specifically, the government of Botswana has recognised women's role in economic development and efforts have been made to integrate gender in the development process. Access to economic opportunities for everyone to development is an overall goal clearly stated in the various national development plans, policies and programmes. Gender plays a major role in the formulation and implementation of these intervention strategies. For instance, the National Gender Programme Framework implemented and monitored by the Gender Affairs Department acknowledges that gender is a key element in the development process. Several strategies have been formulated to improve women's status by enhancing their participation in the economy. Despite these efforts, there exist disparities among men and women in the country. Although women constitute more than half of the population in Botswana, they are more vulnerable to poverty and make up the majority of the unemployed. They are poorer than men, have less access to and control over economic resources and skill training. Female-headed households have to survive on the lowest incomes relative to those households headed by males. To analyse the situation, the paper utilized various theoretical perspectives including the gender analysis approach which covers such perspectives as the Women In Development (WID); Women and development (WAD); and Gender and Development (GAD). The paper also applied the Power and Patriarchy Theory and the Life Course Theory. To present a comprehensive picture of the status of women, the study utilized data derived from 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey (BCWIS) and the 2011 Population and Housing Census.

**Keywords:** Gender, poverty, inequality, Botswana

### **Introduction**

Globally, women are the most affected by poverty. Although poverty affects men, women and children, there appears to be a stronger link between women and poverty. They are poorer than men and have less access to and control over socio-economic resources such as land, livestock and income. Women have a prominent position in agricultural production, but they lack control over

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resources and are discriminated in markets for private and public goods and services. Intervention strategies have been put in place to rectify the situation by providing a more conducive environment for women to access resources. In Botswana the situation is not any different, disparities between female-headed and male-headed households is wide despite the government's commendable strides in terms of socio-economic development. The position of the government is that policies and programmes should benefit all citizens equally. Access to economic opportunities for everyone is clearly stated in the various national development plans, policies and programmes. More specifically, the government has recognised women's role in economic development and efforts have been made to mainstream gender in the development process. Despite the design and implementation of various policies and programmes to address this gap, poverty is more profound among female-headed than male-headed households (Magombeyi and Odhiambo, 2017).

This paper explores why women and female headed households seem to be more vulnerable to poverty compared to their male headed households in Botswana. The paper drew upon the 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey (BCWIS); the 2011 Population and Housing Census (PHC), analytical reports and information from organizations such as United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF). The multiple sources of data utilized provide a comprehensive picture on women and poverty in Botswana making it possible to apply various theoretical perspectives to the paper. The paper is organized in four sections. The first section encompasses introduction, discussion of key concepts and the different theoretical perspectives pertaining to female headed households and poverty. The second section is a presentation on the policies and programmes targeting poverty in Botswana. In the third section, the poverty situation in Botswana is discussed within the context of the theoretical perspectives presented in the second section. The last section is the conclusion to the paper.

### **Female headed household's vulnerability to poverty**

Various perspectives have been put forwarded to explain the vulnerability of women and female-headed households to poverty and why poverty continues to persist amongst them, despite the implementation of numerous intervention strategies not only in Botswana but also globally. Under this section the paper discusses the Women in Development (WID); Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Rathgeber, 1990). In addition the paper also utilizes the Patriarchy and Power Theory and the Life Course Theory (Lim, 1997; Vandecasteele, 2011). The Patriarchy and Power Theory looks at the gender relation in the household and society while the Life Course Theory places emphasis on the events that a person goes through which has an impact on their lives (Lim, 1997; Vandecasteele, 2011). Before discussing the various perspectives it is necessary to define the key concepts utilized in the paper i.e. poverty, household, household head and gender.

Poverty is complex, multidimensional and is caused by multiple factors ranging from social to economic, political and cultural (White and Killick, 2001). It is a persistent problem which governments and policy makers have for a very long time tried to eradicate. The concept poverty is defined in various ways depending on the approach and purpose to which the information is put. The different definitions may include material deprivation i.e. low income and consumption levels (Kabeer, 2015). It includes social factors such as class, education and more importantly gender (Kabeer, 2015). It may also comprise lack of access and control over productive assets. Vulnerability to natural disasters like floods and famine and economic phenomena such as inflation are further characteristics of poverty (White and Killick, 2001). Poverty is a widespread problem

and cuts across society but remains more prevalent amongst women and female-headed household than male-headed households.

The household is an effective concept in poverty analysis as it is regarded as a socio-economic unit where production, distribution and consumption activities take place (Chant, 2008). The 2011 Botswana Population and Housing Census, like in previous censuses, defined household as a unit composed of one or more persons 'living together under the same roof' and 'eating from the same pot' and or making common provision for food and other living arrangements (CSO, 2011;4). Based on this definition, the term household depicts a group of people related or not who live together and share shelter, food and other basic requirements. Household headship is a concept interlinked with household. It implies the power to make important decisions in a number of matters such as allocation of household resources, responsibilities, organization of household production, schooling of children and supporting the household economically (Chant, 2008). While household headship implies the power to make important decisions in a number of matters such as allocation of household resources, responsibilities, organization of household production, schooling of children and supporting the household economically (Kabeer, 2015). The 2011 Population and Housing Census defined the head of household as any male or female, at least 12 years old who is regarded by other members of the household as head (CSO, 2011). The person may or may not be a blood relative. In cases where there is no one aged 12 years or over, the eldest child will have to be entered as the head. Heads of households can be male or female. It had been noted that most national and international studies report a 'female-headed household' as a unit where an adult woman (usually with children) resides without a male partner (Mookodi, 2000). In any analysis on the causes of poverty specific attention should be paid to gender inequalities in access to, and control over resources among households (Kabeer, 2015). Male-headed households tend to be economically better than female-headed ones essentially because they have access to productive resources (Kabeer, 2015). Women and female headed households are more likely to suffer poverty and economic marginalization. Female headed households are said to be more vulnerable to poverty. Explanations put forward are usually linked to their participation in the development process and more specifically their access and control to resources (Kabeer, 2015). It was thought that the development process affected men and women in the same way.

Women and female-headed households are said to be more vulnerable to poverty because they have no access or control to resources (Chant, 2008). Females tend to head larger- sized households than males, with the result that female-headed households ended up having a higher dependency ratio (Kabeer, 2015). Female heads of households are usually less educated than male headed households and thereby limiting their opportunities to employment. All this is an indication of the feminization of poverty (Chant, 2008). Aspersions have been cast on the thesis of feminization of poverty, in that women are presented as a homogeneous group and there tend to be an over-emphasis on the economic aspects overlooking social ones (Kabeer, 2015). However female-headed households are more prone to poverty resulting in the formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes and policies targeting female-headed households (Chant, 2008).

Gender is recognized as a vital component of the development process in the implementation of population policies and programmes because of its influential role in different aspects of people's lives (Chant, 2008). Gender is a significant development concept mainly because it emphasizes the human dimension in development planning and programming. Information desegregated by gender is needed to illustrate the different roles, activities and responsibilities of women and men. It facilitates the assessment of the different roles played by

women and men in society, as contributors to and beneficiaries of development. More importantly gender is also useful in the explanation of the vulnerability of women and female-headed households to poverty (Chant, 2008).

Before the 1970s perceptions were that the development process affected men and women in the same way. Therefore development policies and programmes were implemented without taking into consideration gender relations (Parpart, 1989). It had been hoped that development would take place as easily especially for women (Chant, 2008). However, many development projects, rather than improving the lives of women, had deprived them of economic opportunities and status (Parpart, 1989). Research on women emphasized the importance of the gender dimension in the development process. The model of integration based on the belief that women could be brought into existing modes of benevolent development without major restructuring of the process of development were beginning to be criticised (Parpart, 1989). It is these happenings that have been associated with the emergence of new approaches to the integration of women into the development process. Three models of integrating women in the development process evolved during this time. The aim of these models was to promote the participation of women in the development process. The Women in Development (WID) approach was the first to be launched followed by Women and Development (WAD) and later the Gender and Development (GAD) approach (Lesetedi, 2001).

The Women in Development (WID) came into being as result of what was happening in the 1970s (Kabeer, 2015). It was argued that women were excluded from development processes efforts and they sought greater equity between women and men (Kabeer, 2015). The WID practitioners pointed to women's invisibility, the lack of data on their activities and concentrated their efforts in trying to ensure women's integration into development. However, the approach had several weaknesses and one of them being that it placed women into already existing patriarchal structures without challenging or changing them (Rathgeber, 1990). It was replaced by WAD approach which emphasized the productive side of women's work i.e. that is the income-generating activities and ignored the reproductive aspect of women's work (Rathgeber, 1990). This approach like the WID approach did not yield the desired results and was in turn replaced by the GAD perspective which is more holistic and inclusive in approach (Rathgeber, 1990). It closely interrogated the totality of social organisation, economic and political life in order to understand how society functions (Chant, 2008; Rathgeber, 1990). The approach assumed that the political is closely connected to the economic and that, consequently, the first step towards women's advancement is to provide the conditions for men and women to overcome poverty (Lesetedi, 2008). It focused on gender and power relations between men and women. Women were acknowledged as active agents and not just recipients of development. The approach further appreciated the fact that the poor are not responsible for the conditions that create their poverty (Rathgeber, 1990). However, GAD has been criticized for its emphasis on the social differences between men and women ignoring the bonds between them (Lesetedi, 2001). It did not go deeply enough into social relations therefore could not explain how these relations undermined strategies directed at women. Although these three approaches have been successful in bringing to the fore the importance of gender in the development process they do not provide a comprehensive analysis as to why women still remain on the fringes of the economy. It is with this consideration in mind that the paper also draws upon the Patriarchy and the Power Theory and the Life Course Theory in an attempt to provide a theoretical explanation to the poverty situation amongst female-headed households.

The inclusion of the Patriarchy and the Power Theory and the Life Course Theory (Vandecasteele, 2011; Lim, 1997)) in the analysis of the household data provided a further analysis of the poverty amongst women and also complemented explanations advanced by WID, WAD and GAD. Both the Patriarchy and Power Theory and Life Course Theory also focus on factors that impact on the socio-economic status of the household (Vandecasteele, 2011; Lim, 1997). They relate the vulnerability of female-headed households directly to unequal power relations between men and women but also bring in the dynamics that prevail in society and the households. The main focus of the Patriarchy and the Power Theory is the role that patriarchy plays in society (Lim, 1997). Patriarchy is a pattern of authority in which men tend to monopolise power in social organization resulting in the disempowerment and oppression of women ((Walby, 1990).). Men have also been known to be oppressed by the patriarchy. Interestingly enough patriarchy is not sustained by men alone but by women as well who unconsciously identify with and defend it to such an extent that they do not even see the need to challenge and oppose it (WLSA, 1999). Research on the status of women show indications of patriarchal practices resulting in women having less economic and political power in comparison to their male counterparts (Rankopo, Phorano and Osei-Hwedie; 2010).

This control over and exploitation of areas of women's lives mean that men benefit materially from patriarchy; they derive concrete economic gains from the subordination of women. All agents of the socialization process such as the family, religion, the legal system, the economic system and political system, educational institutions and the media, are the pillars of the patriarchal system and structure (Walby, 1990). Domination and control are expressed, achieved and sustained through values promoted by these socializing agents. Due to patriarchy all the power and authority within the family, the society and the state remain entirely in the hands of men (Sultana, 2010). Women experience oppression, control and exploitation at a daily level both within and outside the family like at the place of work (Sultana, 2010). Many scholars (e.g. Mookodi, 2000) have used the patriarchal perspective in analyzing the status of female-headed households in society. According to Mookodi the unequal power relations prevalent in society are a result of the unequal power relations between men and women perpetuated by patriarchy. As a result women are deprived of their legal rights and opportunities as well as access to and control over resources such as land, property, and livestock making them more vulnerable to poverty.

On the other hand the Life Course Theory goes a step further and links the situation of women with events that they experience within the household (Vandecasteele, 2011). Family formations play a dominant role in this theory and it does specify that individuals go through different events in their lives which later bear an impact on their social status. It argues that early exposure to poverty begins in childhood when there is a struggle over available resources like food and clothes (McDonough, Sackerb, and Wiggins, 2005). The struggle over resources continues as individuals experience different life events like leaving home, earning wages or getting married. Individuals' lives are continually influenced by their ever-changing life events. Studies on poverty should emphasize the importance of life course events as immediate predictors of poverty entry (Vandecasteele, 2011). Life course events like the birth of a child, job loss, or divorce increased an individual's chances of being poor. These events can determine the poverty status of an individual. For instance, the life event of childbirth in the family may increase the vulnerability of female single parent households to poverty because the family will require extra resources for the upkeep of the new addition the family (Vandecasteele, 2011). Gender, educational level and social class are also determining factors in increasing the risk of poverty amongst individuals (Rathgeber, 1990). Lowly educated individuals living in a household with household head who has a low level

of education have a higher risk of poverty entry. They will consistently experience the highest poverty entry risk in comparison to those who are better educated. Divorce or separation can also push individuals especially women to the poverty entry risk.

In this paper WID, WAD and GAD approaches will be used in the analysis of the poverty situation amongst women and female-headed households (Rathgeber, 1990). These approaches have over the years dominated the studies on gender and development and proved very useful in the analysis of gender relations (Beetham and Demetriades, 2007). The Patriarchy and the Power Theory and the Life Course Theory (Vandecasteele, 2011, Lim 1997) will also be utilized in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the unequal gender power relations. While WID, WAD and GAD examines gender relations in relation to policy formulation and programme implementation i.e. from a broad perspective, the Patriarchy and the Power Theory and the Life Course examines the unequal power relations at household level which also impact on the interventions strategies (Vandecasteele, 2011, Lim 1997).

### **Policies and programmes targeting the eradication of poverty**

The eradication of poverty especially amongst women is a major concern globally. At regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has identified poverty as a major problem and an impediment to the attainment of gender equality (SADC, 2013). There is a higher incidence of poverty among female-headed households than among male-headed households (Kabeer, 2015). In their efforts to eradicate poverty and attaining gender equality member states had put in place gender/women empowerment policies and programmes (SADC, 2013). Gender has been recognized as key factor as evidenced by it being mainstreamed into most policies and programmes targeting poverty (Monyeki, 2014). Efforts have been made to integrate gender in the development process. In some instances; commendable strides in terms of employment creation and economic investments have also been made. Despite these efforts, gender equity has been elusive as disparities among social categories in the population still exist (Chant, 2008). Women appear to be more disadvantaged than men (Chant, 2008). They are poorer than men, and have less access to and control over economic resources (SADC, 2013). To compound the situation women are faced with social, economic, and political discrimination. This is not only at policy and programme level but it also translated to the level of the household where female-headed households are faced with a lot of challenges relative to those households headed by males.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) formulated the Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008 (SADC, 2013). The protocol acknowledged the importance of gender and development and emphasized the importance of achieving gender equality (SADC, 2013). The protocol also outlined regional, global and continental instruments for achieving gender equality. It also provided a forum for the sharing of best practices, peer support and review towards the goal of gender equality. The protocol was adopted and signed by all member states in August 2008 with the exception of Botswana and Mauritius as they had raised some reservations regarding the protocol (SADC, 2013). In 2013 the Protocol was reviewed and aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). The revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provided for the empowerment of women, elimination of discrimination, and the promotion of gender equality and equity through gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects. The Botswana government signed and acceded to the Revised Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development on May 11, 2017 (Motsamai, 2017).

Botswana had not deviated from the path of eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality despite not having signed the protocol until after it was revised in 2017 (Motsamai, 2017). The government still continued, like other SADC member states to implement poverty eradication policies and programmes.

Through government initiatives poverty levels in the country have been decreasing, although they still remain high (Magombeyi and Odhiambo, 2017). Government poverty reduction initiatives focus on three channels in alleviating poverty. First is increase in livelihood for the poor, followed by the expansion in basic service provision and lastly social safety net (Magombeyi and Odhiambo, 2017). The initiatives are guided by the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NSPR) which was formed in 2003 and gives a policy framework for the implementation of poverty programmes in a coordinated manner (Sekwati, Narayana and Raboloko, 2012). The NSPR also seeks to harmonize the various sectoral initiatives relating to poverty. Before the introduction of NSPR the policies and programmes were fragmented, without a framework or guidelines for addressing poverty. This resulted in uncoordinated interventions which yielded insignificant results in terms of reducing poverty. Policies and programmes which fall under the strategy include Ipelegeng and the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture (ISPAAD) (Sekwati, Narayana and Raboloko, 2012). Ipelegeng provides employment support for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. While ISPAAD is an agricultural programme whose objective is to promote food security through facilitating access to inputs and credit to farmers (Sekwati, Narayana and Raboloko, 2012).

Due to its commitment to promoting gender equality and the eradication of all types of discrimination against women and children, the government established the Gender Affairs Division based in the Ministry of Nationalities, Immigration and Gender (Monyeki, 2014). The division's main responsibility is the creation of a gender sensitive environment through the promotion of gender equality and ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in all the policies and programmes (Rakgoasi, 2014). It is also responsible for the implementation of the National Gender Programme Framework and the development of gender sensitive sectoral policies and procedures (Monyeki, 2014). In addition, the division also coordinates and facilitates capacity building in various aspects of gender and development. Currently the division has been administering and disbursing funds allocated under Women Economic Empowerment Programme to individual women and women's groups. Under this programme an individual or group can get a grant of up to P300 000 to start any business except the liquor business (Monyeki, 2014). Groups may include men; however, their number should not exceed that of women. The division in partnership with other organizations also coordinates other women focused programmes like Women Entrepreneurship Development programme to support women enterprises registered and operating in Botswana which have potential for growth (Monyeki, 2014).

All strategies point to the empowerment of women. The general belief is that gender equality can be attained through empowerment (Souso and Modie, 2010). These programmes are seen as strategies to increase productivity of the various economic activities that women are involved as well as provide them with skills which will capacitate them to effectively participate in business ventures. These practices spearheaded by the Gender Affairs Division makes it possible for women to participate in economic activities and in the process that generates income for themselves and their households. Women empowerment through participation in economic activities is in line with the WID approach which had advocated for their integration into the economy. (Souso and Modie, 2010). To some extent women's participation in the economy has improved their lives but it has not brought about gender equality. The desired results have not been



realised because the structures governing economic participation remain the same and women are expected to fit within these structures. Women still experience higher levels of unemployment and poverty. They are not able to access economic opportunities as compared to their male counterparts (Gender Links, 2014).

### **Female headed households and poverty in Botswana**

Although, Botswana is classified as an upper-middle-income and medium human development country by international organisations the country is faced with high levels of poverty and social inequality, unemployment, increasing incidence of HIV and gender-based violence (GBV) (Gender Links, 2014). Women particularly tend to experience higher levels of unemployment and poverty than men. Despite Government interventions women still do not have equal access to economic opportunities as men. Through interventions strategies employed by government the issue of gender inequality has been dealt with some positive results particularly in some sectors. Administrative decision-making posts in the public and private sector, about 55% and 40% are held by women respectively (SADC; 2013). A lot still needs to be done on the political front where only 8% of Members of Parliament are female (SADC. 2013). Gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS still remain big challenges. The prevalence of gender based violence in Botswana is quite high with over two thirds of women reporting that they have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime mainly at the hands of people they know and the majority of the perpetrators are men (Gender Links, 2012). In relation to HIV, females rank high in infected and affected population (Statistics Botswana, 2014). The patriarchal nature of society as well as socio-cultural practices and customary laws add to the problems of inequality (Rankopo, Phorano O., and Osei-Hwedie, K; 2010).

The information discussed under this section is mainly from the 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey (BCWIS) and the 2011 Population and Housing Census (PHC). The BCWIS was conducted from April 2009 to March 2010 to provide data that would provide a holistic picture of the poverty situation in the country. The survey had an expanded coverage of topics which included information on education, health, access to amenities, employment and community activities. The 2011 Population and Housing Census, the fifth in a series of censuses conducted after every 10 years since 1971, and is the most current comprising of more comprehensive data covering the whole country. The paper also utilized information from other sources like UNICEF and related organizations. According to the BCWIS the number of households had increased between 2002/03 and 2009/10, with the majority headed by males (Statistics Botswana, 2013). However, females are inclined to head household with larger size than males. The survey showed that the incidence of poverty had gone down between 2002/03 and 2009/10. The incidence dropped from 30.6 percent as observed during the 2002/03 Household Income and Expenditure Survey to 19.3 percent in the 2009/10 BCWIS (Statistics Botswana, 2013). This could be attributed partially to the government's socio-economic policies and programmes to eradicate poverty. Despite these efforts, poverty has remained high and is still more prevalent among female-headed households (Statistics Botswana, 2013). Females were the most affected by poverty compared to their male counterparts and this was also reflected at household level, households headed by females were found to be the most affected by poverty. Of those households living below the poverty datum line, 6.3 percent were headed by females while 4.4 percent were male headed. For most of the poor households their main source of income was wages from employment, followed by pensions and remittances often headed by females. It was estimated

that the national unemployment rate was at 17.9 percent while the rate for women was even higher than the national rate at 21.4 percent and for men it was 14.6 percent (Statistics Botswana, 2013).

The 2011 Population and Housing Census results revealed similar patterns to those in the 2009/10 BCWIS in that the number of households had increased over the years. The increase in the number of households in the country from 1981 to 2011 (Lesetedi, 2014) was a reflection of the formation of new households. This is consistent with the results in 1981, 1991 and 2001 population censuses. This is illustrated in table 1. The increase in the number of households in the country from 1981 to 2011 was due to the formation of new households (Lesetedi, 2014).

**Table 1: Total Population, Number of Households and Household Size 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011**

| Year | Population | Number of Households | Average Household size |
|------|------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1981 | 941,027    | 170,833              | 5.5                    |
| 1991 | 1,326,796  | 276,209              | 4.8                    |
| 2001 | 1,680,863  | 404,706              | 4.2                    |
| 2011 | 2,024,78   | 550,926              | 3.7                    |

Source: 2011 Population and Housing Census

This was as a result of the breakdown of households into smaller units which is evidenced by a decrease in household sizes over the same period. In 1981 the average household size was 5.5 persons and it dropped to 3.7 persons in 2001. The majority of the households comprised of only one member and very few households had 10 or more members. Despite the increase in the number of households and a decrease in household size the males headed more households in comparison to those headed by females. However, males were more likely to preside over small households compared to females. Females headed large sized households compared to males. Table 2 shows the heads of households by the size and sex of household head.

**Table 2: Heads of Households by Size of Household and Sex of Head**

| Number of members | Sex of Head of household |      |        |      | Total   |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------|--------|------|---------|
|                   | Male                     |      | Female |      |         |
|                   | No                       | %    | No     | %    |         |
| 1                 | 100,600                  | 65.8 | 52,335 | 34.2 | 152,935 |
| 2                 | 55,020                   | 55.3 | 44,414 | 44.7 | 99,434  |
| 3                 | 36,730                   | 47.6 | 40,419 | 52.4 | 77,149  |
| 4                 | 30,256                   | 46.5 | 34,790 | 53.5 | 65,046  |
| 5                 | 22,965                   | 46.2 | 26,752 | 53.8 | 49,717  |
| 6                 | 15,543                   | 44.3 | 19,552 | 55.7 | 35,095  |
| 7                 | 9,735                    | 41.6 | 13,645 | 38.4 | 23,380  |
| 8                 | 6,167                    | 39.5 | 9,436  | 60.5 | 15,603  |

|              |         |      |         |      |         |
|--------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|
| 9            | 4,229   | 39.0 | 6,613   | 61.0 | 10,842  |
| 10+          | 8,099   | 37.3 | 13,623  | 62.7 | 21,722  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | 289,344 | 52.5 | 261,579 | 47.5 | 550,923 |

Source: 2011 Population and Housing Census

The 2011 census results also showed that female-headed households were more prone to poverty, unlike their male counterparts and the households that they headed. More female heads of households dominated the lower ranks of the education levels. Most female heads had attained primary education and below and also dominated when it came to attaining education at colleges of education and health sciences institution. Male heads of households on the other hand tended to dominate at the level of secondary education, apprenticeship, brigades' education and university education and seemed to fare much better all round in comparison to female-headed households. See table 3. Education is a major deciding factor as to how well a household fares economically and it is an entry point to the world of work (Chant, 2008).

**Table 3: Household Head by Level of Education and Gender**

| Level of Education             | Sex of Head of household |      |         |      | Total   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------|---------|------|---------|
|                                | Male                     |      | Female  |      |         |
|                                | No                       | %    | No      | %    |         |
| Nursery Level                  | 108                      | 42.2 | 148     | 57.8 | 256     |
| Primary Education              | 58,599                   | 44.7 | 72,479  | 55.3 | 131,078 |
| Secondary Education            | 92,080                   | 51.9 | 85,318  | 48.1 | 177,398 |
| Apprentice                     | 5,710                    | 85.3 | 985     | 14.7 | 6,695   |
| Brigades Education             | 6,092                    | 69.3 | 2,696   | 30.7 | 8,788   |
| Technical/Vocational           | 11,747                   | 57.9 | 8,553   | 42.1 | 20,300  |
| Education Colleges             | 7,662                    | 41.5 | 10,812  | 58.5 | 18,474  |
| Institution of Health Sciences | 1,439                    | 33.2 | 2,894   | 66.8 | 4,333   |
| University Education           | 35,896                   | 62.1 | 21,878  | 37.9 | 57,774  |
| Non-formal Education           | 1,683                    | 37.9 | 2,755   | 62.1 | 4,438   |
| Total                          | 221,016                  | 51.5 | 208,518 | 48.5 | 429,534 |

Source: 2011 Population and Housing Census

Having access to and control over resources such as cash makes a big difference to a household in the alleviation of poverty (WLSA, 1999). During the census members of households were asked to indicate their sources of cash and these included remittances from both inside and outside Botswana, pension, rent maintenance, employment, and destitute allowance and government rations. Members belonging to female headed households were more dependent on remittances, maintenance, and destitute allowance as a source of cash. These types of sources of

cash are not that stable and consistent pointing to the vulnerability of such households. For the majority of the members belonging to male headed households they reported employment as their source of cash which is a more reliable and consistent source especially in comparison to sources like remittances, maintenance, and destitute allowance. In addition members from male headed of households tended to be involved in lucrative and stable activities like craftwork. In comparison most members from female headed households reported having received cash from activities like the sale of beer or clothes.

Control over and access to property and livestock contributes to the sustenance of households. An overwhelming majority of female headed households (75 percent) reported as owning no livestock. In comparison more male-headed households reported ownership of profitable livestock like cattle, sheep and goats as compared to female-headed households. In comparison more (64.2 percent) female headed households reported as owning poultry. Women dominate agricultural activities and yet their participation is centered on poultry rearing and small stock production to a limited extent (Alexander et al 2005). Table 4 highlights these gender differences. Patriarchal practices limit women's access to cattle as a result cattle is the domain of men reinforced through gender biased inheritance customs (Rankopo, Phorano O., and Osei-Hwedie, K; 2010). Although women may not have control over the sell or use of cattle; some might have what is referred to as *relative* access to livestock assets such as milk and draught power (Petitt; 2016:20). This is not the same as ownership but these benefits make a great difference in the livelihood of the household. However, this is changing with quite a good number of women venturing into livestock production and management made possible by the implementation of government schemes targeting gender inequality (Petitt; 2016).

**Table 4: Household Head by Type of Livestock owned and Gender**

| Livestock     | Sex of Head of household |            |                |            | Total          |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
|               | Male                     |            | Female         |            |                |
|               | Number                   | Percentage | Number         | Percentage |                |
| None          | 1                        | 25.0       | 3              | 75.0       | <b>4</b>       |
| Cattle        | 19,173                   | 61.3       | 12,083         | 38.7       | 31,256         |
| Goats         | 9,140                    | 53.5       | 7,932          | 46.5       | 17,072         |
| Sheep         | 235                      | 60.6       | 153            | 39.4       | 388            |
| Pigs          | 97                       | 53.6       | 84             | 46.4       | 181            |
| Poultry       | 18,109                   | 37.6       | 30,116         | 62.4       | 48,225         |
| Donkeys/Mules | 2,587                    | 58.5       | 1,833          | 41.5       | 4,420          |
| Horses        | 170                      | 70.2       | 72             | 29.8       | 242            |
| Ostrich       | 9                        | 60.0       | 6              | 40.0       | 15             |
| Game          | 608                      | 49.4       | 624            | 50.6       | 1,232          |
| Total         | <b>289,360</b>           | 52.5       | <b>261,568</b> | 47.5       | <b>550,928</b> |

Source: 2011 Population and Housing Census

Households also had to indicate whether any of their members owned or had access to land used for planting and to state how the land was acquired land. Land could be acquired from the land board; employer or relative; self-allocation; tribal/communal land or through inheritance just to name few. In all instances members from male headed households dominated all the categories as

shown in Table 5. This is an indication that male headed households have an upper hand in all modes of acquisition of agricultural land. Generally, land for agricultural production is owned and controlled by men (Alexander et al 2005). Women cannot fully benefit from most government agricultural schemes. Although women have access to the land, they do not own it.

**Table 5: Land acquisition by Gender of Household Head**

| Land acquisition  | Male    |            | Female  |            | Total   |
|-------------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---------|
|                   | Number  | Percentage | Number  | Percentage |         |
| Land board        | 84,247  | 50.7       | 81,869  | 49.3       | 166,116 |
| Tribal/Communal   | 3,216   | 52.7       | 2,881   | 47.3       | 6,097   |
| Inheritance       | 24,555  | 52.6       | 22,131  | 47.4       | 46,686  |
| Freehold          | 934     | 54.9       | 766     | 45.1       | 1,700   |
| Lease             | 1,785   | 60.2       | 1,179   | 39.8       | 2,964   |
| TGLP              | 78      | 59.5       | 53      | 40.5       | 131     |
| Syndicate         | 264     | 54.0       | 225     | 46.0       | 489     |
| Employer/Relative | 21,405  | 55.0       | 17,506  | 45.0       | 38,911  |
| Self-Allocated    | 4,367   | 55.9       | 3,442   | 44.1       | 7,809   |
| Total             | 142,686 | 52.0       | 131,621 | 48.0       | 274,307 |

Source: 2011 Population and Housing Census

The analysis of both data sets i.e. the 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey (BCWIS) and the 2011 Population and Housing Census (PHC) shows that female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty than those headed by males. Male headed households and their members have better access to resources like cash, employment, livestock and land. A study conducted in rural Botswana found that women and female-headed households were more likely to suffer poverty and economic marginalisation resulting in them being poorer than their male counterparts (Akinsola and Popovitch, 2002). The study identified several factors that contributed to a higher proportion of female-headed households being poorer than male counterparts. These included abandonment by their male partners and a general decline in extended family support. Females tend to head larger- sized households than males, with the result that female-headed households ended up having a higher dependency ratio. Female heads of households are usually less educated than male headed households and thereby limiting their opportunities for employment (Chant, 2008). This points to the feminization of poverty- a concept which has been criticized for over-emphasizing the income over social issues which are just as important in the analysis of poverty. Despite the contention over the thesis of feminization of poverty, female-headed households compared to male-headed households incontrovertibly face challenges in accessing resources in Botswana.

The theoretical perspectives as presented in section of the paper all point to the vulnerability of women to poverty. There is no doubt that female-headed households tend to be

more prone to poverty. There has been widespread recognition of this fact resulting in the formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes and policies that have targeted female-headed households (Chant, 2008). In recognition of this the government has come up with a number of policies and programmes to address issues of poverty and gender inequalities. This is in line with the WID, WAD and GAD approaches aimed at showing a relationship between gender and development especially from an economic point of view. Their emphasis was on women's participation in the development process and generating income. Both WID and GAD tended to ignore the gender relations between men and women as having an impact in the participation of the development process (Chant, 2008). Of the three, GAD has a more holistic approach and focused on gender relations instead of women per se it looked at the socio-economic and political environment under which women lived. The theory also recognizes the fact that the first step in women's advancement is to provide the conditions for both men and women to tackle poverty and that the poor are not responsible for their condition, which creates their poverty. Government interventions strategies have also gone through these processes as evidenced by the evolution of the Women's Affairs Unit in the 1980s to a now fully fledged Gender Affairs Division (Monyeki, 2014). As already pointed out despite the formulation of policies and strategies targeting poverty, women still remain the most affected by it.

The vulnerability of the female-headed households can further be explained through the application of the Life Course Theory and Patriarchy and the Power Theory to household data provides a comprehensive picture of the poverty situation amongst female-headed households by filling in the gaps left by the WID, WAD and GAD approaches. The Patriarchy and Power Theory and Life Course Theory both focus on factors that impact on the socio-economic status of the household and the role that men and women play in the situation. However, the Patriarchy and Power Theory extends the discussion further by going beyond the economic factors relating the vulnerability of female-headed households to unequal power relations between men and women. This control over and exploitation of areas of women's lives mean that men benefit materially from patriarchy; they derive concrete economic gains from the subordination of women. On the other hand Life Course Theory also goes a step further and links the situation of women with events that they experience as family members. In other words vulnerability to poverty can also be linked to life events like education, work, getting married etc. Both data sets noted an increase in the number of households in the country. This was a reflection of the formation of new households presumably due to the breakdown of households into smaller units. Other contributory factors to the increase in the number of households included dissolution of marriages, breakdown of the family institution or unit and employment opportunities. This led to the formation of new households and an increase in the number of female-headed households which are susceptible to poverty.

The Life Course Theory attests that life events like divorce can increase an individual's chance of being poor (Vandecasteele, 2011). Life events can determine the social-economic status of a family or household. There is a great deal that can go on within the family with permanent implications for the household. This is not to say that male-headed households are not affected by life events. Male-headed households too are affected by similar life events, but often the impact is not as devastating as in female-headed households. Other social factors, like employment and education tend to cushion male-headed households from the risk of poverty. The census data also reveal that more male heads reported having attained better tertiary educational qualifications than female household heads. This enables them find better employment opportunities. However, the Patriarchy and Power Theory provides another perspective to the situation. It emphasizes the role

that patriarchy plays in the marginalisation of women. Patriarchy ensures that men benefit more from the different sectors of society and they have easier access to economic benefits (Walby, 1990) than their female counterparts. Patriarchy through social institutions promotes the wellbeing of men over women (Lim 1997). Employment is usually seen as a more reliable and consistent source of cash. This is major source of income for male-headed households. While most female-headed households relied mainly on maintenance, destitute allowance and government rations and these sources have a tendency to promote dependency on patriarchal driven structures. The unequal power relations between men and women as perpetuated by patriarchy result in women being denied access to factors of production that are critical to deal with vulnerability and poverty (Mookodi, 2000). Patriarchy permeates all social institutions starting with the family, through to other institutions like education and the economy.

## **Conclusion**

The Botswana government in recognition of the women and female-headed households that are more vulnerable to poverty than males, have come up with intervention strategies that not only target poverty but also try to promote gender equality. The government has even gone to extent of setting up a division solely focusing on gender issues. Despite the contention that the “feminization of poverty” is limited in its analysis of poverty, the data in the study points to the fact that female-headed households compared to male-headed households are more prone to poverty. The theoretical perspectives used in the analysis of poverty and women in this study attest to the vulnerability of women and female-headed households to poverty. Confirming that any study on poverty should go beyond economic factors and also look into other factors like gender and education. In addition a study on poverty amongst women and female-headed should also look at the impact of the various government initiatives on women and female headed households.

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